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## Mobilizing Black America

Lieutenant Colonel  
**Jesse L. Watson, III**  
U. S. Army

*Faculty Research Advisor*

Dr. Alan Gropman

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"MOBILIZING BLACK AMERICA"

THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, LIKE ALL OF AMERICA, HAS A DEEP INTEREST IN ALL ELEMENTS OF OUR NATION'S POPULATION MAKING VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS COUNTRY. THIS PAPER PROVIDES DETAILS OF NUMEROUS SOLUTIONS THAT MAY BE EMPLOYED TO IMPROVE FAMILIES, EDUCATION, CRIME, HEALTH AND THE OVERAL STATUS OF BLACKS IN AMERICA. IT IS FITTING AND PROPER FOR THE INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE, THE ACADEMIC INSTITUTION MOST CONCERNED WITH RESOURCES MOBILIZATION, TO BE ACUTELY ATTENTIVE TO POTENTIAL WASTE IN HUMAN ASSETS. ALTHOUGH MOST OF THESE SOLUTIONS ARE NOT REVOLUTIONARY, THEY DO REQUIRE VISION. THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE CAN HELP TO FOCUS THE POWER OF ALL INSTITUTIONS-- PUBLIC AND PRIVATE -- ON IMPROVING THE LOT OF BLACK AMERICA.

Jesse L. Watson, III

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## INTRODUCTION

The Armed Forces of the United States has recently completed one of the most successful military operations in history. Since then, the challenges that the Department of Defense faces have changed substantially. We now have the task of reducing the armed forces and at the same time ensuring that a quality force is maintained. To accomplish this goal, we must be able to mobilize every segment of America should that become necessary. This section will provide recommendations to ensure that black Americans will fully be an effective segment of the mobilization base. Part two of this effort described the many problems in the black community that are barriers to effective mobilization. This section will focus on solutions to the major problems.

The recommendations herein come from an institution within the Department of Defense. That government department is vitally concerned with the quality of people, its most precious asset. It is fitting and proper for the Industrial College, the academic institution most concerned with resources mobilization, to be acutely attentive to potential waste in human assets.

### STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY

The family is the most important element in preparing for constructive roles in society. Economic, cultural and even

governmental pressures have worked together to weaken the foundation of the black family. Much of the negative pathology within the black community can be traced to the disintegration of the family, and strengthening it must be at the apex of any plan.

How has the black family changed? In 1960, 33 percent of black children were not living with two parents. That figure had nearly doubled by 1988. During the same period, the fraction of all black children born to an unmarried mother rose from 23 percent to more than 65 percent.<sup>1</sup> Children raised in dysfunctional families are poor candidates for military service, and single parents -- the majority are black females -- are prohibited from enlisting. The Army utilizes AR 601-210 for its standards to enlist while the other services have similar regulations. This regulation disqualifies most single parents and lowers, significantly, the number of black females who meet the dependency requirements for active duty service.

What can be done? The family in the black community, in the past, served as a source of stability and security for youth. The community must find ways to reduce the number of children born to unwed teenage mothers for many substantive reasons.

Children who grow up in a one parent home are much more likely to live in poverty than are their peers who grow up in two parent homes and are therefore deprived of the physical, mental and emotional nutrition necessary for effective adulthood. This is

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<sup>1</sup>Crane, J. & Ellwood, D. "Family Change Among Black Americans," Journal of Economic Perspectives, 1990, 4 (4), p.63.

especially true of black children. According to figures produced by the Census Bureau, 15 percent of children in black two parent families lived in poverty in 1987. By comparison, 65 percent of children in black one parent families lived in poverty.<sup>2</sup> The vast majority of one parent family homes in the black community are headed by women. In addition to the likelihood of poverty's affect in a single parent household, the absence of a father, a male figure is debilitating.<sup>3</sup>

A solution to the problem of the absent father has centered around attempts to provide for surrogates in the form of male role model volunteers. These volunteers are intended to span the gap left by the absent father". "Big Brothers" is one program where adult males serve as a friend to young boys, and become involved with them in some activity on a periodic basis. Male volunteers commit to spend time with designated youth on a recurring basis. They generally take the young person to sporting events, museums, fishing or just for a walk in the park. They offer an ear if the youngster simply needs someone to talk to.

When it comes to a discussion of economic disadvantages associated with single parenting, most experts concur with Joyce Ladner, a sociologist at Howard University in Washington, D.C.:

It's not a new problem, but in recent years it

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<sup>2</sup>National Commission On Children. BEYOND RHETORIC A New American Agenda for Children and Families. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991, p.25.

<sup>3</sup>Wilson, W. "The Black Community in the 1980's," Annals of The American Academy, March 1981, p.36.

has been growing very rapidly. Look at the number of new households headed by never-married black females, many of whom live in poverty and without any marketable job skills. Among young black women, the statistics underscore what they see around them every day.<sup>4</sup>

We have attempted to provide sustenance for such family units in the past several decades through welfare related programs. In 1989, the government spent more than \$21 billion for social, health and welfare services to teenage mothers who couldn't afford to raise their own babies alone.<sup>5</sup>

But this approach fails to get at the root of the problem. What is needed is a program aimed at preventing teenage pregnancy. According to the National Academy of Sciences, the United States has simply failed in its responsibility to educate its youth about sexual behavior.<sup>6</sup> We must instill some sense of the traditional values which were once prevalent in our society. This is made even more difficult, as Mathias said: "In a society where irresponsible sex is not only condoned but irresistibly packaged and promoted.

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<sup>4</sup>Vobejda, B. " 25% of Black Women May Never Marry, Washington Post, Nov. 11, 1991, p. A1.

<sup>5</sup>Mathias, L. " Single Teen Moms," Washington Post. Jan. 2, 1992, p. C5.

<sup>6</sup>Business-Higher Education Forum. THREE REALITIES Minority Life in the United States Washington, D.C. American Council on Education, 1990, p.58.

Surrounded with all the glitz and hype on television and in music and films, teenagers respond emotionally to the clear message that sex brings instant gratification, power, recognition, and happiness.<sup>7</sup>

What many young people fail to consider is that advancement is difficult at best, but having to support a child born out-of-wedlock only compounds the problem. Having babies out-of-wedlock closes off and shuts down educational and employment options for many young women; it also burdens the strained support mechanisms for housing, health, nutrition and public assistance.<sup>8</sup>

WHAT CAN BE DONE NOW? We can improve the family and, at the same time, improve the likelihood that the child may grow up to be a productive citizen by teaching both boys and girls about the rewards and obligations associated with becoming parents. This can take place in public schools, local churches, and community organizations. We must force young men to accept responsibility for the financial and emotional support of the children they father. We should force working fathers to pay child support, by garnishing their pay if necessary. As a potential incentive, they should also be allowed to claim "illegitimate" children on their state and federal taxes.

The young, absent, unemployed, and unwed father presents the biggest challenge to solving the problem of single parent households. As a minimum, we must insist that he provide some specified financial support. The intent is to force him to accept

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<sup>7</sup>Mathias, "Single Teen Moms", p.C5.

<sup>8</sup>Business-Higher Education Forum, THREE REALITIES, p.58.

responsibility for the 'family' he has started. Since many times the only contact an unwed father will make with his child is at the hospital shortly after the child's birth, some hospitals have successfully instituted programs which use this visit as an excellent opportunity to identify and document paternity. This enables the office of the State Attorney General to initiate child support. Although this involvement is only a first step, it is serving as a needed catalyst to unite family units.

#### A HEALTHY BLACK AMERICA

Health related issues are receiving tremendous focus by blacks today. The television news conference conducted by Ervin "Magic" Johnson in November 1991 forever changed the way Americans in general, and black Americans in particular think about Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The Magic Johnson Foundation has been established to conduct fund raising activities that support AIDS research. Magic has taken upon himself a large share of the responsibility for educating the black community about AIDS. He has visited schools at all levels in an attempt to inform young people of the tremendous risk of AIDS and the responsibilities associated with sexual activity. "But it's so much more than the message. After all people have been preaching abstinence and responsibility to young people since doctors began monitoring the disease in 1981. It's the messenger that is getting through."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Randolph, L." Magic and Cookie Johnson SPEAK OUT FOR FIRST TIME ON LOVE, AIDS AND MARRIAGE," Ebony, April 1992, p.100.

Many people are convinced that because of the celebrity status that "Magic" enjoys, as well as his new found association with President Bush and the National Commission on AIDS, he is helping to stem the spread of AIDS in America and especially black America already.

The federal government has implemented a project through the centers for Disease Control aimed at increasing public awareness and preventing the spread of AIDS. This project is "a multimillion-dollar television, print and radio campaign in which the words sex and condoms are never mentioned."<sup>10</sup> This campaign attempts to stir the curiosity of its audience, and implores them to dial a 1-800 number to get detailed and personalized information.

Some other suggestions that are in varying stages of implementation that may prove successful include:

- o Culturally sensitive and nonjudgmental public education programs.
- o Targeted education and counseling of high-risk individuals.
- o Safe, confidential and non-threatening HIV screening.
- o Access to therapy.<sup>11</sup>

These kinds of programs provide the framework for involving

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<sup>10</sup>Gladwell, M. "Aids Education" Effort Called "Short On Facts." Washington "Post. March 27, 1992, p. A19.

<sup>11</sup>Satcher, D. "Crime, Sin, or Disease: Drug Abuse & Aids in the African-American Community," Journal of Health Care For the Poor & Underserved, Vol. 1, Fall 1990, p.216.

different segments of the community in curtailing the spread of the dreaded AIDS virus. There is a role that the schools, churches, fraternal organizations, business, social, and welfare agencies can and should play to fight this epidemic.

#### IMMUNIZATION

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, under the direction of Dr. Louis Sullivan, has strongly supported efforts to improve the immunization process currently utilized in this country. It has been reported that almost all children begin vaccinations in infancy.<sup>12</sup> They are active participants in either private or public health care and up to about the time they are seven months old approximately 90% have been vaccinated. The problem is, that figure drops to less than 50% in pockets of our inner cities according to Secretary Sullivan.<sup>13</sup>

One of the first solutions to the immunization problem is to make vaccinations more available and accessible. This is particularly critical as it relates to poor and inner city residents who rely on public agencies to provide inoculations. A simple change that could produce tremendous results would be to modify the operating hours. It has been suggested that clinics need to be open between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m., in addition to so called

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<sup>12</sup>Mason, J. Speech 25th National Immunization Conference, June 11, 1991, Washington D.C.

<sup>13</sup>Sullivan, L. Remarks at White House Introduction of President Bush, Washington, D.C. June 13, 1991.

"normal" hours.

Another program currently being tested in Chicago, New York, and Newark, New Jersey has been referred to as "one stop shopping". The intent of this program is to link immunizations with other social service programs. For example, a mother would be able to report to the established agency that handles Aid For Dependent Children (AFDC) in her community, and have her children immunized at the same place and at the same time. A similar exchange could occur as routine services are provided by Women, Infants and Children (WIC). The entire thrust of these initiatives center on the fact that children tend to accompany their mothers on visits to these agencies anyway - so let's take advantage of their presence and vaccinate them.

The Center for Disease Control reports that immunizations is one of the most cost-effective means of preventing disease. According to their figures every dollar spent on vaccinations for measles, mumps, and rubella saves fourteen dollars in long-term health care costs.<sup>14</sup> When fiscal responsibility is required, we cannot afford not to spend one dollar to save fourteen. This is especially true when the public sector is responsible for delivering vaccine to about 50% of the U.S. population.<sup>15</sup>

Some additional suggestions that are in varying stages of implementation in the public health sector include:

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<sup>14</sup>HHS Issue Profile, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. No. 10, November 1991, p.1.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

- o Receiving immunizations without having appointments.
- o Waiving Check-up before immunizations.
- o Giving several shots during one visit.
- o Vaccines provided at emergency rooms and acute care clinics.

These programs were developed initially for use in the public sector, but there is utility for the private sector as well.

#### EMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate for blacks and whites has increased during the period 1970-1980. White unemployment rates increased from 3.7 percent to 5.9 percent; while for blacks it rose from 6.3 percent to 12.3 percent during the same period.

#### PRIVATE SECTOR INITIATIVES

One solution to improve participation rates is to make the pay more attractive. Some fast-food restaurants and other low-wage employers are paying up to \$5.00 an hour in major metropolitan areas in order to attract young workers.<sup>16</sup> This additional pay is important to let young people know that even at the entry level, work has its monetary rewards. It also helps to spark interest in jobs that a significant portion of young blacks would otherwise fail to consider. It is important that the optimism that young people bring to the world of work is tempered with realism, as it

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<sup>16</sup>Holzer, H. Can We Solve Black Youth Unemployment? Challenge, 1988, 76, p.46.

relates to pay. The value of a dollar may be internalized for the first time by many of these young people because of the sources of their income in the past - welfare or drug sales.

Another solution, which has a smaller target population, involves trying to make more of a connection between what is learned at school and how it relates to the workplace. The owner of a McDonalds franchise in California has challenged his student employees to bring their homework with them to work. He has authorized them to be paid for an hour of work to complete an hour of homework while on the job. This is an example of designing a program that both capitalizes on the students' desire or need to work, his school requirements, and helps them get more out of their part-time employment.<sup>17</sup>

The private sector business community has developed several other methods of attempting to improve employment opportunities for minority children. One of these programs is "Jobs for Youth". In this program, participating companies have people who "help teach basic academic skills and practical skills to young unemployed minorities". These companies not only fill their own entry level positions from this pool of eligible workers, but also serve as a clearinghouse for employment.<sup>18</sup> This is an excellent example of job training being conducted by corporate America, even though the

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<sup>17</sup>Charner, I. Facts and Issues. Proceedings of The Quality Connection: Linking Education and Work. Washington, D.C.: Department of Labor, 1992, p.4.

<sup>18</sup>Newport, J. Steps to Help the Urban Black Men. Fortune Magazine. December 18, 1989, p.172.

participants do not work for the companies. Jobs for Youth had its beginning in Chicago with financing from Kraft, Marshall Field's, and others. A key concept of this, and similar programs, is that it helps young people get a more realistic definition of what skills are required for success on the job.

#### PUBLIC SECTOR INITIATIVES

The government has instituted a number of programs which attempt to provide a second chance to disadvantaged workers through The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), which was enacted in 1983. The overall intent of JTPA is to help with skill training and job services. During the summer months, young people are brought into the workforce and also receive remedial education under Title II of this act. This summer hire program for many young people is their first work experience. Therefore, a great deal of effort is expended to ensure that they receive job training as well as emotional support from those who hire them. Young people are kept off the street, offered an opportunity to earn money, and develop good work habits. During this time the employer has the opportunity to accomplish the work activity at reduced costs to him because of the training funds received as an incentive to participate in the program, and also receive a tax credit of 40% of the salary paid.

Job Corp is the most expensive of the federal programs, but is also one of the most successful. It costs more because individuals are provided food, housing, education, vocational training, medical

care, counseling and other support services.<sup>19</sup> Although expensive, over a million young men and women have successfully completed the program and entered the work force. Job Corp is very intensive and can last up to 24 months, depending on the educational needs of the individual and the apprentice programs enrolled in. This program, primarily, addresses the educational and vocational needs of the student. However, it also is responsive to needs related to "personal hygiene, nutrition, developing positive work habits, and making constructive use of leisure time."<sup>20</sup>

In January of 1992, President Bush unveiled Job Training 2000 which consists of four major elements:

- o Reforming Vocational Training.
- o Facilitating the transition from school-to-work.
- o Facilitating the transition from welfare-to-work.
- o Promoting life-long learning.<sup>21</sup>

Facilitating the transition from welfare-to-work is one facet of the program that presents some very interesting possibilities. There have been discussions that center around why people from families on welfare have poor employment records. Some argue it is because of lower skills, while others are concerned that benefits will be denied or reduced. This program provides training for up to eight weeks. While the individual continues to receive payments

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<sup>19</sup>Department of Labor, "Job Corp", Fact Sheet No. 90-3, Washington, D.C., 1990.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>\_\_\_\_\_. Job Training 2000. White House Press Release, Washington, D.C., January 17, 1992, p.2.

through whatever welfare program he is enrolled in. Following this stage the individual is placed in a job for a four month trial period where the firm has the option to retain the worker at the completion of that period - assuming work is satisfactory. "The value of the worker's public assistance would gradually decrease...and the state would pay the firm some portion the state saves by having the individual off the welfare rolls and paying taxes."<sup>22</sup> Similar programs already exist in several states and have met with success.

The economic trends in the United States indicate a change from manufacturing to service related employment and these trends in the service sector " are projected to show an increase of almost 17 million jobs".<sup>23</sup> This may help young blacks who have generally been concentrated in inner cities. "The solution to the current levels of high unemployment among blacks lies in a combination of full employment policies and equal access to all jobs. . . . In setting the employment agenda for the future it is important to recognize that one will never work without the other."<sup>24</sup>

#### CRIME

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p.5.

<sup>23</sup>Carnevale, A. America and the New Economy. Washington, D.C.: Department of Labor, 1991, p.8.

<sup>24</sup>Swift, J., DREAM 7 REALITY The Modern Black Struggle for Freedom & Equality, New York, Greenwood Press, 1991, p.121.

Crime is another problem that affects the black community, and especially the black male. While black men account for only 6 percent of the population in the United States, they make up half of its male prisoners in local, state and federal jails.<sup>25</sup> In addition, a report issued by the Sentencing Project indicates the following sad facts:

- o Almost one in four (23 percent) black men in the age group 20-29 is either in prison, jail, on probation or parole on any given day.
- o For white men.....one in 16 (6.2 percent)
- o In 1986, the last year with complete statistics --609,690--black males were under the control of the criminal justice system much greater than the total number of black men of all ages enrolled in college: 436,000.<sup>26</sup>

Army Regulation 601-210 prevents people from serving in the Army who have a felony conviction. This stipulation in the regulation will disqualify black males, in large numbers, from the opportunity to participate in military service, but more importantly will deprive the service of a potentially valuable mobilizable group. The services cannot enlist criminals, obviously, and is eager to keep people from criminal activity for this reason.

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<sup>25</sup>Staples, R. "Black Male Genocide," The Black Scholar, June 1987 (18), p.66

<sup>26</sup>Mauer, M. Young Black Men and the Criminal Justice System. Washington, D.C.: The Sentencing Project, 1990, p.3.

Most of the crimes committed by young black males tend to be drug related. Increasingly, the sale of drugs to alienated and powerless young black men has produced an alternative economy which can provide relatively high wages and some self-esteem to young men denied both in mainstream America. With the lack of equally successful role models in the inner city, drug dealers often become heroes to ghetto youth.<sup>27</sup>

There are countless solutions and recommendations that have been offered in an attempt to stop the spread of drugs and crime overall. On one side, there are those who want to take drug criminals off the streets.

...Some pioneering research and police field testing suggest that if we again double the present federal and state prison population-to somewhere between 1 million and 1.5 million - and leave our city and county jail population at the present 400,000, we will break the back of America's 30-year crime wave.<sup>28</sup>

Proposals that came from the office of William Bennett, the former National Drug Policy Director, are based on similar premises. He advocated utilizing additional law enforcement personnel and technology as a means to target drug offenders. This

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid, p.9.

<sup>28</sup>Metvin, E. "An Anti-Crime Solution," Washington Post, January 1992, C4.

approach would focus on arresting more people for drug related offenses. Generally, law enforcement agencies would concentrate their efforts against the drug "crack" since it is usually sold more openly than other drugs.

This approach is likely to result in even higher rates of incarceration for blacks and Hispanics since drug law enforcement is largely targeted against "crack", more often used by low income blacks and Hispanics. As drug offenders make up an increasing share of the prison population, the non-white prison population will become disproportionately larger. In Florida, for example, black inmates now make up 73.3 percent of all drug offenders, compared to 53.6 percent of prison admissions for other offenses.<sup>29</sup>

Other measures to get tough on crime include trying teenagers who commit violent crimes as adults. This proposal by Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly is aimed at reducing the spread of violence that has reached epidemic proportions in Washington, D.C.

Implementation of these programs, as well as similar ones, will obviously get some number of criminals off the street. But, will there be a corresponding reduction in crime? This is not clear.

On the other side of the coin are programs and policies

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<sup>29</sup>Mauer, "The Sentencing Project", p.5.

intended to reduce prison populations and prevent young people from turning to a life of crime. One group, the National Commission on Children, conducted a series of in depth interviews with teenage prisoners. The interviews were conducted at the Bennettsville, South Carolina prison for teenage males. Here is a summary of their results:

. . . They heard stories of how high-risk behaviors that began as youthful experimentation and striving for peer acceptance often resulted in violence and death. These young men are serving time for crimes that range from drug offenses to homicide; their sentences vary from one year to life. Yet their backgrounds are remarkably similar. Virtually, all grew up in low-income, single parent families without male authority figures or any close role models in their families or communities. Most began to do poorly in school at an early age and eventually dropped out. Their peers encouraged them to try alcohol and drugs, and they began to commit crimes -- stealing, selling drugs -- that eventually landed them in prison. Although they were all teenagers, some already had children of their own.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>National Commission on Children, BEYOND RHETORIC, p.220.

The author of "The Sentencing Project" contends that prison should be a last resort for those offenders that cannot be helped in other ways. Some recommendations in lieu of imprisonment include:

- o restitution to victims
- o community service
- o intensive probation supervision
- o treatment programs
- o employment and education
- o community corrections programs<sup>31</sup>

The presence of gangs in the black community has led many poorer inner-city residents to give in to the pressures exerted by the gang members. Some communities are fighting back in an effort to reclaim their communities. They have assembled coalitions to prevent gangs from terrorizing neighborhoods and making it unsafe for decent people to walk the streets. One method that several schools have used to support the community in this endeavor has been to prohibit the wearing of hats and other articles of clothing associated with gang membership. They have also made great efforts to remove graffiti and keep it removed. This serves to prevent gangs from gaining the perception of control of the neighborhood. In other communities, police activities have evolved to include increased presence of patrols, curfews for teenagers, and increased stops and searches. These techniques are comforting to many but have resulted in comments "that many minority-group members fear

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<sup>31</sup>Mauer, "The Sentencing Project", p.6.

the gang in blue as much as they do criminals."<sup>32</sup>

We cannot overlook according to The New Republic, "as almost everyone positioned between the far right and the far left by now understands, the hugh disproportion of black convicts is a product not of a deeply flawed criminal justice system but of a deeply rooted social pathology. It is a pathology spawned by centuries of slavery, a subsequent century of officially sanctioned discrimination, further decades of residual bias, and even some well-meaning but misguided paternalism. Also, the very successes of social policy, by distilling the talented, the determined, and the lucky out of the slums, leave behind an even more potent pathological mixture."<sup>33</sup> It will take a combination of many of these methods to reduce crime significantly. In all solutions there must be an open dialogue of communication between schools, community and the family. Parents must get involved and reclaim their kids from the streets --it has to start in the home!

#### EDUCATION IS A KEY

Today, individuals have to meet certain educational requirements for enlistment in the armed forces of the United States. A large number of black students dropout of school and they ultimately relinquish their capability to enlist. Chicago's dropout rate in recent years was approximately 40 percent, while Detroit was

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<sup>32</sup>Meter, M., " LAPD: A Force Unto Itself", Newsweek, March 16, 1992, p.37.

<sup>33</sup>The New Republic. "One in Four", March 26, 1990, p.6.

nearly as high.<sup>34</sup>

What can be done to reduce dropouts? Coca-Cola funded a program in San Antonio, Texas called Valued Youth Partnership which seeks to identify minority students in junior and senior high school who are dropout risks. This program involves the student by pairing him up with a younger student as a tutor. "The high school tutors learn responsibility and self-respect, the younger kids get needed attention, and both tutors and those tutored end up improving their attendance and academic performance."<sup>35</sup>

The "Concerned Black Men", a group of professionals in Washington, D.C. that are trying a different solution to reducing dropouts. This group has adopted a class of inner city first graders in 1987 and has committed to sponsor them until they finish high school. "Every school day at least one man from the organization takes time out from his work to serve in the classroom as a teacher's aide, passing out papers and helping children with their studies. By their very presence these men show that education is not sissy."<sup>36</sup> Once we have succeeded in keeping black Americans in school we can get on with the task of motivating them to learn. It is widely reported that black children achieve lower grades in school and score lower on standard exams than do their peers of other races.

In order to improve test scores and motivate black students,

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<sup>34</sup>National Commission On Children. BEYOND RHETORIC.P.71.

<sup>35</sup>Newport, J. " Steps to Help the Black Man," p.172.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

we must start when they are young. We cannot afford to wait until they are in first grade to focus on learning skills. Head Start, a federally funded, comprehensive early childhood program for low-income preschool children, primarily age three to five, and their families" works well.<sup>37</sup>

The basic program began in the early 1960's and has been shown to improve children's self-esteem, their health, motor coordination, and development. It also appears that Head Start graduates are less likely to fail a grade in school or to require special education services.<sup>38</sup> Students who participated in this program have shown greater potential for academic success than have their peers. One longitudinal study which began in 1975 discovered that "students in preschool programs have significant gains in IQ; and preschool participation had long-term benefits on math achievements."<sup>39</sup>

There have been reductions in funding for such programs by the federal government; however, that seems to be changing. In 1990, congress joined President Bush in calling for full participation in Head Start by all income-eligible children by 1994 and appropriated \$7.6 billion for that purpose.<sup>40</sup>

The president, and the governors of the separate states

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid. p.189.

<sup>38</sup>McKey, R. et al. The Impact of Head Start On Children, Families & Communities, Washington, D.C.: Department of Health & Human Services, 1985, pp.9-21.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p.347.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid. p.190.

participated in an important summit meeting in Charlottesville, Va. in 1989. This meeting was dedicated to improving education in America. The first of the six goals adopted by the group is entitled "Readiness for School", and states: By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.<sup>41</sup> One objective under that goal that is specifically stated is: All disadvantaged and disabled children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school.<sup>42</sup>

This objective does not focus on Head Start but opens the door to any preschool program capable of supporting the educational goals of America 2000. Headstart provides an ideal mechanism for black Americans because the program is for low income families. According to the Bureau of Census during the year of 1988, there were 32% of the black population living below the poverty line.<sup>43</sup> This is certainly a startling statistic in itself; however, in 1987 only 16% (400,000) of the nation's 2.5 million eligible children were enrolled in Head Start.

In keeping with the theme of focusing on young children to improve their chances for academic success, there are other programs that have met with a degree of success in solving the problem of education. One of these programs is called "Say Yes to

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<sup>41</sup>AMERICA 2000 An Education Strategy, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1991, p.61.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Jencks, C. & Peterson, P. The Urban Underclass. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1991.

a Youngster's Future" and was developed under the auspices of the National Urban Coalition. According to the leadership of the coalition, one job which we must do is that of preparing children of color for their future in a high-tech world.<sup>44</sup> Community organizations which include fraternities, sororities and local clubs are asked to participate as tutors while serving as positive role models and mentors simultaneously. Say Yes also has science and math classes for the student and adult family members to learn about these areas in a non-threatening environment. The success of the program is very much dependent on the involvement of the entire community, and many believe "that every community center, YWCA/YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, library and church ought to have at least one Say Yes Program in place every afternoon or Saturday".<sup>45</sup> One of the key ingredients of the Say Yes Program is an effort to convince young people that it is culturally acceptable to do well academically. "We have a chance to change the culture of so many of our youngsters who are afraid to do well in their studies because, by doing so, they face the contempt of their peers. We have a chance to transform this negative and counterproductive peer pressure."<sup>46</sup> Peer pressure surfaces often as reason that young people do or don't do certain things. According to Black Issues, influence of peers is cited as one of the top reasons why blacks

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<sup>44</sup>Edelin, R. Shaping the Urban Future Must Begin With the Children, Journal of Negro Education, vol. 58, 1989, p.251.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. p.252.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid. p.253.

continue their educational pursuits. It is critical that as many young men and women in the black community as possible be encouraged to continue their formal education. This is important for them as a stepping stone for the future, as well as for those who are influenced by them.

Educating black males has become a topic of considerable discussion by academicians and politicians alike. It is commonly accepted by most experts that the black male has been "shortchanged" the most by the educational system. "A study by Rosenberg and Simmons found that black males consistently received lower grades than did black females, and that grades for blacks were generally lower than were those of their white counterparts."<sup>47</sup> I cannot help but wonder if the notion of poor grades is a part of the negative and counter-productive peer pressure issue.

There are those who advocate special programs aimed at black males in the schools -- most focus on role models in some way. In public schools, "black males constituted only 1.2 percent of the total 17 percent of the elementary teachers who were males".<sup>48</sup> The Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that in 1990 there were 18,000 black males teaching elementary school.<sup>49</sup>

These numbers point to the difficulty inherent in developing

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<sup>47</sup>Gary, L. Black Men. Beverly Hills, Ca.: Sage Productions, 1981, p.202.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid. p.203.

<sup>49</sup>The Black Male Teacher-A Vanishing Breed. Crisis, October 1991, vol. 98, p.20.

programs dependent on the presence of a black male teacher. In fact, according to Dr. Lawrence Gary it could be concluded that a majority of black males can spend a whole career in the public schools and have very little interaction with a black male teacher, counselor, or administrator until the secondary school years. Even then, this interaction is limited.<sup>50</sup>

One remedy to the shortage of black male teachers is to intensify efforts to recruit them into the teaching field. "Benedict College (SC) already has a military recruiting program going, with the help of a \$300,000 grant from the Coca-Cola Foundation in Atlanta. Benedict's program, called "AFTER" (for "Armed Forces Teacher Education for Retirees"), last year had 14 students, nine of whom were black males."<sup>51</sup>

A similar program, sponsored by the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, is in its early stages. This program seeks to utilize the instructor training, received by all recruiters, in the classroom. The young noncommissioned officers who serve as recruiters have to interact with students on a daily basis and are comfortable with having to serve as role models. This program would also make it possible for these highly qualified recruiters to earn a college degree in education. They would commit to a second career in teaching upon completion of their service as recruiters.

Any program that will increase the number of black male teachers is worthy of consideration. This is important because we

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<sup>50</sup>Gary, Black Men, p.203.

<sup>51</sup>Crisis. "The Black Male Teacher", p.20.

must do all we can to decrease negative behavior that leads to crime, which ultimately affects all of society. Dr. Spencer, who specializes in minority educational development suggests, "that schools recruit black male teachers more actively, perhaps by linking college scholarships to requirements that recipients teach in inner-city schools for one or two years after graduation,"<sup>52</sup>

There is indeed a significant amount of controversy related to the issue of educating young black children in general, and black males in particular. The idea of a separate classroom for black males has been advocated by some. The program that has received the most publicity is a part of the Detroit public school system. Proponents of educating black males in specifically designated schools believe that such schools would represent a force for building the self-esteem of young black males. They think these types of programs would give the children a sense of purpose and destiny which often escapes them in the greater society and even in the normal regular classroom situation.<sup>53</sup>

Those who support the idea of "Black Academies" generally do so with the contention that these young men need a way for positive male role models to become a part of their lives. "All-male classes would address the needs of young males without a father at home, giving them a positive male figure with whom they could

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid. p.169.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. p.13.

identify."<sup>54</sup>

But, is this the solution that has eluded us for years? There are many who would argue that there is no such thing as **separate but equal**. A similar notion was expressed in an article in **National Education Association Today**:

At a time when we're talking about the need to "mainstream" children with disabilities, at a time when we're trying to emphasize inclusivity, people have begun to talk about singling out a group of children for special classes and special attention. Although sympathetic to the idea that children's individual needs should be addressed, segregation is not the answer, and I worry about the message it sends these youngsters. The message is that in order to excel, they need to be in segregated environments. The underlying assumption is that black males are inferior - that they can't learn unless they're secluded and given special privileges.<sup>55</sup>

This view is shared by a large number of people. Nevertheless, Dr. Holland, the director of the Center for Education of African-

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<sup>54</sup>Should There Be Special Schools or Classes for Black Males?, NEA Today, October 1991, p.37.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid. p.37.

American Males has been quoted as concluding, "that with these schools, school systems are moving toward some resolution of this academic failure in the African-American male. Although he thinks a variety of approaches should be tried, he is suggesting that this is one that should not be dismissed or disregarded as being against the law, or sexist.<sup>56</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

The Department of Defense, like all of America, has a deep interest in all elements of our nation's population making valuable contributions to this country. This chapter provided details of numerous solutions that have been employed to improve the overall status of blacks in America in various circumstances. Although most of these solutions are not revolutionary, they do require vision. DOD should support those programs that are cost effective, serve large numbers of people, and involve the participation of a significant segment of the community.

The family has played a crucial role in American life throughout our history. In the black community that role is extremely important because of the influence, stability and security that is available in the traditional family. Programs that are successful in reducing the number of single-parent headed families offer a great deal of potential. The reduction of the likelihood of poverty for children living in two parent homes is significant - 65% in one parent homes, and 15% in two parent homes.

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<sup>56</sup>NEA Today. Should There be Special Schools?, p.13.

We must reduce **teenage pregnancy**. The idea of teaching both boys, and girls, the rewards and responsibilities that are involved with parenting cannot be ignored.

**Education**, like family, cuts across all aspects of life. Academic success or failure can be traced to the individual's involvement in **preschool** activities. Head Start has proven to provide valuable benefits for long term gains in IQ as well as overall improved social and academic achievement. Any preschool program that provides disadvantaged children a mechanism to start school ready to learn must be capitalized on.

The armed forces may be helping to reduce **drop-outs** by not accepting non high school graduates for enlistment. Other programs to reduce drop-outs focus on efforts to identify at risk students and provide them with student and adult role models. **Black male role models** are few, and efforts to increase their presence in schools, communities and in homes are currently underway in urban areas throughout the nation. Programs like these show a positive representation of black males and an example of overcoming the stigma of the **unemployed**.

An individual, or community that successfully reduces the spread of **crime** and **disease** would certainly provide more opportunities for blacks to be a part of the "mainstream". Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly and Magic Johnson are two individuals committed to halting the spread of violence and AIDS, respectively, that have reached epidemic proportions. We must stop allowing gangs, guns, drugs and sex to kill us and our children.

DOD can help to focus the power of all institutions-public and private-on improving the lot of black America. We can begin by applauding the models of success that have been started, and support policies and programs that overcome our weaknesses.